

sengers said, "Let him live, let him live," and brushed the pillar as before; he regained his former body.

Then they went further to the north. There was such a hazy scorching heat that birds fell from the air. He asked "Where am I?" and the answer was, "This is the Hell of Abi 阿鼻地獄²⁴ where you will be broiled." On arrival he was caught and broiled. Only when he heard temple bells ringing did the heat cool and allow him a rest. After three days, when the messengers knocked at the gate of hell saying, "Let him live, let him live," he became alive again.

They led him to the gate of the golden pavilion, and said as before, "Here he is." The two men at the gate said to him, "The reason you were called here is that you abused Bodhisattva Gyōgi in the land of Ashihara. You were called here to atone for your sin. The Bodhisattva will be born in this palace after he finishes his life in that land. We are waiting for him, for his arrival is close at hand. Be sure not to eat anything at this place. Go back as quickly as possible." He returned eastward with the messengers and realized that nine days had passed since his death.

When he awoke, he called his disciples. Hearing their master calling, they came to see him, delighted to the point of tears. Chikō, however, was greatly grieved and told his disciples about hell. In great awe he looked for a chance to confess that he had been envious of the Most Venerable Gyōgi.

In the meantime Bodhisattva Gyōgi had bridges made, canals dug, and wharfs built in Naniwa. Hardly had Chikō recovered from exhaustion when he went to see Bodhisattva Gyōgi. At first sight the latter perceived by divine omniscience what the former had in his mind, and out of mercy Gyōgi said to him, "I wonder why we could not see each other before." Chikō confessed his sin, saying, "I was once so envious of you that I remarked, 'I am not only a great monk of a long virtuous life, but I am also endowed with natural wisdom while Gyōgi is a man of superficial knowledge and not ordained. Why does the emperor admire Gyōgi and ignore me?' Because of this sin of my mouth I was called to King Yama to embrace the iron and copper pillars. For nine days I stayed in his land to atone for my sin of abuse. I am confessing this to you, for I am afraid other sins will affect

my future life. I beseech you to help me become free from sins." The Most Venerable Gyōgi, looking compassionate, kept silent. Then Chikō said to him, "I saw a palace built of gold where you will be born." On hearing this, Gyōgi said, "What a delight! What an honor!"

Indeed we learn that the mouth is a gate to invite calamities which hurt us, and the tongue is a sharp axe to chop up the good. Thus the *Fushigikō bosatsu-kyō* 不思議光菩薩經²⁵ has a passage which refers to this: "Bodhisattva Nyūzai 饒財菩薩 is destined for ninety-one *kalpa*²⁶ to fall into the wombs of lewd women, to be deserted after birth, and to be eaten by foxes and wolves because he talked about the faults of Bodhisattva Kenten 賢天菩薩."

After that time the Venerable Chikō had faith in Bodhisattva Gyōgi, knowing that the latter was really a sage.²⁷ On the second day of the second month in the spring of the sixth year of the ox, the twenty-first year of the Tenpyō era, Bodhisattva Gyōgi realized that his life here was completed and left his clerical form on Mt. Ikoma 生馬山,²⁸ while his compassionate spirit moved on to the golden palace. The Most Venerable Chikō, on the other hand, proclaimed Buddhist teachings and guided the people from illusion to righteousness. In the reign of Emperor Shirakabe 白壁天皇,²⁹ this storehouse of wisdom left the land of Japan, and nobody knows where his extraordinary spirit has gone.

8

On the Immediate Reward of Salvaging the Lives of a Crab and a Frog and Setting Them Free¹

Okisome no omi Taime 置染臣鯛女 was the daughter of a nun named Hōni 法通,² the presiding officer³ of the nunnery of Tomi 富尼寺⁴ in the capital of Nara. She was so devoted in her pursuit of the path

25. Quoted in the *Bonmō-kyō koshakki* (Taishō, XL, 706b).

26. 劫 *kā*, a Hindu Buddhist cosmological unit of time.

27. 聖人 *shōnin*; see Chap II(2)c.

28. Gyōgi was cremated on the eastern side of Mt. Ikoma on the border of Yamato and Kawachi, according to his wishes.

29. Emperor Kōnin 光仁 (709-781).

1. One of the "grateful animal" tales, similar to II.12. Cf. *Sanbō ekotoba* (II, 13).

2. Unknown.

3. 上位: see Chap. I(1)d, n. 84.

4. Or 藤福尼院: it was located at present Nara-shi 奈良市. Although Ekisai identifies it with Ryūfuku-ji 隆福寺, Fukuyama maintains that they are different temples founded by Gyōgi. See Fukuyama, *Narachi jin*, 206-207.

24. Or 無間地獄. In the Buddhist cosmology hell is divided into eight divisions, that is, Hell of Repetition 等活地獄, Hell of the Black Rope 黑繩地獄, Hell of Assembly (All Living Beings) 衆合地獄, Hell of Lamentations 叫喚地獄, Hell of Great Lamentations 大叫喚地獄, Hell of Scorching Heat 焦熱地獄, Hell of Great Scorching Heat 大焦熱地獄, and Hell of No-interval 無間地獄. For a detailed description of this hell, see A. K. Reischauer, "Genshin's Ojo Yoshu," 40-46.

of Buddha that she preserved her chastity. She used to collect herbs every day and serve them to the Most Venerable Gyōgi.

One day she went to the mountain to collect herbs and saw a large snake swallowing a big frog. She entreated the snake, "Please set the frog free for my sake." But the snake would not. She entreated again, saying, "I will become your wife if you do me the favor of letting the frog go." On hearing that, the large snake raised its head high to see her face and disgorged the frog. Whereupon she said to the snake, "Come to me in seven days."

On the appointed day, she hid herself in the house with all the openings closed. The snake came as expected and knocked on the wall with its tail. The next morning, terrified, she went to her master, who lived at the mountain temple of Ikoma.⁵ He said to her, "You cannot break your promise. Only be strict in observing the precepts." Therefore, she reaffirmed her faith in the Three Treasures and her acceptance of the five precepts,⁶ and returned home.

On the way she met a strange old man with a big crab. She said, "Who are you, old man? Will you please set the crab free for me?" He answered, "I am Edoi no Nimaro 畫問邇麻呂 from Uhara district, Settsu province 攝津國兎原郡.⁷ At the age of seventy-eight I had neither sons to depend upon nor the means of making a living. In Naniwa I happened to find this crab. I cannot give it to you, for I have promised it to someone." She took off her robe, begging him to sell her the crab in exchange for her robe, but he would not listen. She then took off her skirt to add to its price, and he finally agreed to her offer. Thereupon, she brought the crab back home⁸ and invited the Most Venerable Gyōgi to hold a service for it, setting it free with a prayer.⁹ Impressed with her deed, the master exclaimed, "How noble! How good!"

That evening the snake came back again, climbed to the roof, and dropped into the house by pulling off part of the thatched roof. The terrified girl heard something jumping and flapping around in her

5. Ikoma-yamadaira 生馬山寺 or Chikurin-ji 竹林寺, at present Arisato in Ikoma-chō, Ikoma-gun, Nara-ken 奈良縣生駒町有里, the site of Gyōgi's tomb.

6. When a man becomes a Buddhist, he professes his faith in the Three Treasures and observes the five precepts, namely, no killing, no stealing, no adultery, no lying, and no drinking. See Chap. I (1), d, n. 88.

7. Present Muko-gun, Hyōgo-ken 兵庫縣武庫郡.

8. The *Sanhō ekotoba* gives a different reading: "... she went back to the temple with the crab ..." which makes more sense than going back home and inviting Gyōgi to her home.

9. When a devotee buys and frees captive fish or birds, he usually invites a Buddhist monk to perform proper rites (放生會 *hōjō-e*). This practice was regarded as a deed of great merit and observed in Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in Japan. See I, 7, n. 12. For 咒願 prayer, see III, 38, n. 35.

bed, and the next morning she found a big crab and a large snake that had been chopped into pieces. Then she realized that the crab she had liberated had come to her rescue out of gratitude. This was also due to the virtue gained by keeping the precepts. Although she wanted to unravel the mystery and tried to identify the old man, she could not find him. It was evident he was an incarnation of Buddha. This is a miraculous event.

9

On Being Born in the Form of an Ox and Made to Work for Usurping the Properties of the Temple of One's Own Dedication¹

Ōtomo no Akamaro 大伴赤麻呂² was the governor of Tama district, Musashi province 武藏國多磨郡.³ He died on the nineteenth of the tenth month, in the first year of the Tenpyō shōhō era,⁴ and was reborn as a black-spotted calf on the seventh of the fifth month in the second year of the same era, with an inscription on its skin.⁵ It could be made out as follows:

"Akamaro dedicated the temple he had built, took liberties with the properties of the temple, and died without paying for them. He was born as an ox to atone for this."

Both his family and friends were led to reflect on themselves and were extremely horrified. They realized how terrible it was to commit such a sin which was bound to be accompanied by retribution. On the first of the sixth month in the same year, this fact was made public for they thought that such an event should be recorded as an example for posterity.⁶

I hope that even those who have nothing of which to repent will read this story, set right their minds, and practice good. Even if you suffer from hunger and drink hot molten copper, never touch the properties of a temple. There is an old saying, "Honeydew in the

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XX, 21).

2. Unknown, but there were a number of Ōtomo families in Musashi.

3. See II, 3, n. 3.

4. 749.

5. Probably black spots that looked like an inscription.

6. According to Torao Toshiya, the date falls on the day when Akamaro's family and friends offered the account of this event to the temple. See *Nihon ryōiki* (NBKT, 70), 205.